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Rogue Valley Community Press

Southern Oregon Social Justice News and Action

NOVEMBER 2015

Community struggles with homelessness conversation

BY VANESSA HOUK

At a recent "listening session" Mayor Stromberg and city councilor Stef Seffinger hosted, Cynthia Rider, Executive Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a board member of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, said she lives in fear of homeless people. "I have a teenage daughter and walking through downtown with her, she is often sexually harassed, even when I am with her. And she is surprised that I am upset, because she says that it happens 4-5 times every day. She is growing up in a community that will tolerate constant harassment of young women."

More than a hundred people showed up to the meeting, which was held in the council chambers. Some who showed up to "listen" could not hear. Residents overflowed into the lobby where they were invited to listen to a small monitor, but the

sound proved to be challenging and many people left without participating.

Inside the council chambers, dozens of people spoke. The city framed the meeting the following way. "The City Council has been receiving numerous reports, complaints and requests this summer about people in town, hanging out downtown and by exit 14, in unusually large numbers, sometimes behaving in ways that clash with the friendly and respectful life-style that is an integral part of what this community is about."

1. What behaviors have you found problematic, threatening, intimidating, dangerous, etc.?
2. What can you tell us about the people causing these problems?
3. What suggestions do you have for how to cope with the situation?"

As a result of that framing, story after story of frightening encounters with the homeless were repeated during the session, many coming from Chamber members. "This is a complex issue," said Katharine Cato, Marketing Director of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce. "It's not a downtown issue, not a Chamber issue. It's about those who choose to be homeless and their abusive behavior. We live in a fragile environment. This issue is about those who do not care about or contribute

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and all your letters, actions and events...



Keystone XL opponents celebrate the pipeline rejection in Ashland.

Obama rejects Keystone XL Pipeline

VIA DEMOCRACY NOW

In a major victory for environmentalists, President Obama has rejected TransCanada's application to build the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Climate activists including 350.org co-founder Bill McKibben praised Obama's decision.

"President Obama is the first world leader to reject a project because of its effect on the climate," McKibben said. "That gives him new stature as an environmental leader, and it eloquently confirms the five years and millions of hours of work that people of every kind put into this fight. We're still awfully sad about Keystone south and are well aware that the next president could undo all this, but this is a day of celebration."

Over the past seven years, the Keystone project was opposed by a broad coalition, including environmentalists, indigenous activists, farmers and ranchers, concerned about both climate change and protecting their land.

HOMELESS 8

KEYSTONE 15

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Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

It's as timely as the leaves changing on the trees in Lithia Park. Fall arrives and with it comes a citywide effort to push back against the homeless. We see it every single year. Part of it stems from downtown businesses who, being that they are in the center of town, deal with problems coming from the homeless community. This "theatre of the oppressed" plays daily, year round, but is especially visible during the heaviest of the tourist season as warm weather invites everyone outside and those sidewalk theatres become full. Some of that winds up being very uncomfortable to watch. I imagine it's even harder on those who are living it.

In this issue you'll find pretty extensive coverage of the city council listening session on "The people passing through". There were good people in that room, and I believe that most people mean well. Unfortunately the conversation was framed so that it was a session that was seeking the worse possible examples of interactions between the housed and un-housed communities.

In the spirit of what Mayor Stromberg asked residents to do, we'd like to make a few suggestions on what the city of Ashland can do to address these concerns.

The city of Ashland should provide access to public restrooms that are open 24/7 and that are located throughout the city. In previous conversations on this topic, the city has stated that this is too costly. With the public testimony of people who live near Railroad Park (for example) speaking of how they see homeless people

defecating in the park while there are often locked restrooms is an example of how the city of Ashland is failing residents, both housed and unhoused.

Placing ten additional trash cans along the bike trail throughout town would be a proactive solution to littering. Currently they are few and far between. Adding a small percentage of garbage pick up to the city's current budget would be money well spent.

Several residents complained of camping. The city could open up floor space inside Pioneer Hall and expand the current cold temperature shelter. It is illegal and unethical for the city of Ashland to punish people for being homeless and for sleeping when there are no other options.

The downtown exclusion zone prevents the city from hosting public meetings in that zone, unless those meetings are not "public" and that opens up a whole new set of problems. This is especially troublesome when the city is using that space to discuss the exclusion zone and the folks who are most affected would face further citations for attending. How can excluded people converse with mayor or city attorney? The city should address this concern in a transparent manner.

There's an old African proverb that says that when elephants fight, it's the grass that gets trampled. Let's all be kind, not fight and take care of the grass.

Kindly,
Vanessa and Jason Houk



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Your Social Justice News Resource

Issue 22

The Rogue Valley Community Press (RVCP) is a publication for the working class and a platform for marginalized voices in our community. Through RVCP, we aim to educate people about social justice issues and inspire them to create positive change. Published monthly, RVCP is available through subscription and local distribution locations.

Contributions from the community are welcome, including articles, letters to the editor, short poetry, and photography. Send submissions to editor@rvcommunitypress.com. All writing accepted for publication will be edited with due respect for the author's intent. Opinions expressed in RVCP are those of the authors, and not necessarily the editors.

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Keystone

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"This is an extraordinary moment for grassroots activism and the fight against fossil fuels," said Friends of the Earth President Erich Pica. "For seven years, people from around the United States campaigned together to transform a previously routine decision to approve a pipeline into a leadership test on climate change."

The Keystone XL pipeline's primary function would have been to move oil from

the tar sands region of Alberta, Canada to port facilities on the South Texas coast, for shipping to overseas customers.

Climate scientist James Hansen, former director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, wrote in The New York Times, "If Canada proceeds, and we do nothing, it will be game over for the climate." Hansen is one of more than 1,200 people who were arrested in front of the White House, protesting Keystone XL.

TPP

CONTINUED FROM 15

(FFTFF) campaign director.

Among the "several sections of grave concern" identified by FFTF are those covering trademarks, pharmaceutical patents, copyright protections, and "trade secrets."

Section J, which addresses Internet Service Providers (ISPs) "is one of the worst sections that impacts the openness of the Internet," according to the digital rights group, which explained further:

This section requires Internet Service Providers to play "copyright cops" and assist in the enforcement of copyright takedown requests -- but it does not require countries to have a system for counter-notices, so a U.S. company could order a website to be taken down in another country, and there would be no way for the person running that website to refute their claims if, say, it was a political criticism website using copyrighted content in a manner consistent with fair use.

Section J makes it so ISPs are not liable for any wrongdoing when they take down content--incentivizing them to err on the side of copyright holders rather than on the side of free speech.

'Public Review Is Needed'

Like-minded groups in Canada, where newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been on the job for all of one day, are sounding similar alarms.

Citing concerns about how the deal would impact human rights, health, employment, environment, and democracy, the Council of Canadians on Thursday demanded a full public consultation—including an independent human rights, economic, and environmental review of the document—before Trudeau goes any further. The group expressed particular concern over investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions, which allow corporations to sue states for lost profits, asking that they be excised from the deal.

"Trudeau is under a lot of pressure to adopt this deal as soon as possible, with calls already coming in from U.S. President Barack Obama and Japanese President Shinto Abe," acknowledged the Council's national chairperson, Maude Barlow. "But a thorough public review is needed before he can establish whether the TPP is truly in Canada's interest."

Or anyone else's, for that matter.

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‘Worse Than We Thought’: TPP A Total Corporate Power Grab Nightmare

BY DEIRDRE FULTON
FOR COMMON DREAMS

As expert analysis of the long-shrouded, newly publicized TransPacific Partnership (TPP) final text continued to roll out on Thursday, consensus formed around one fundamental assessment of the 12-nation pact: It's worse than we thought.

"From leaks, we knew quite a bit about the agreement, but in chapter after chapter the final text is worse than we expected with the demands of the 500 official U.S. trade advisers representing corporate interests satisfied to the detriment of the public interest," said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

In fact, Public Citizen charged, the TPP rolls back past public interest reforms to the U.S. trade model while expanding problematic provisions demanded by the hundreds of official U.S. corporate trade advisers who had a hand in the negotiations while citizens were left in the dark.

On issues ranging from climate change to food safety, from open Internet to access to medicines, the TPP "is a disaster," declared Nick Dearden of Global Justice Now.

"Now that we've seen the full text, it turns out the job-killing TPP is worse than anything we could've imagined," added Charles Chamberlain, executive director of Democracy for America.

"This agreement would push down wages, flood our nation with unsafe imported food, raise the price of life-saving medicine, all the while trading with countries where gays and single mothers can be stoned to death."

'Act of Climate Denial'

Major climate action groups, including 350.org and the Sierra Club, were quick to point out that the text was notable as much for what it didn't say as what for what it did. "The TPP is an act of climate denial," said 350 policy director Jason Kowalski on Thursday. "While the text is full of handouts to the fossil fuel industry,

it doesn't mention the words climate change once."

What it does do, however, is give "fossil fuel companies the extraordinary ability to sue local governments that try and keep fossil fuels in the ground," Kowalski continued. "If a province puts a moratorium on fracking, corporations can sue; if a community tries to stop a coal mine, corporations can overrule them. In short, these rules undermine countries' ability to do what scientists say is the single most important thing we can do to combat the climate crisis: keep fossil fuels in the ground."

Furthermore, Friends of the Earth (FOE) said in its response to the final text, the agreement "is designed to protect 'free trade' in dirty energy products such as tar sands oil, coal from the Powder River Basin, and liquefied natural gas shipped out of West Coast ports." The result, FOE warned, will be "more climate change from carbon emissions across the Pacific."

"President Obama has sold the American people a false bill of goods," said FOE president Erich Pica. "The TransPacific Partnership fails President Obama's pledge to make the TPP an environmentally sound trade agreement."

International observers were no less critical. Matthew Rimmer, a professor of intellectual property and innovation law at Australia's Queensland University of Technology and trade policy expert, told Fairfax Media it looks like U.S. trade officials have been "greenwashing" the agreement.

"The environment chapter confirms some of the worst nightmares of environmental groups and climate activists," Rimmer told the news outlet. "The agreement has poor coverage of environmental issues, and weak enforcement mechanisms. There is only limited coverage of biodiversity, conservation, marine capture fisheries, and trade in environmental services."

'Attack Sensible Food Safety Rules'

With its provisions that tie the hands of food inspectors at international borders and give more power to biotechnology firms, "the TPP is a giveaway to big



agribusiness and food companies," said Wenonah Hauter, Food & Water Watch executive director. Such corporate entities, she said, want to use trade deals like the TPP "to attack sensible food safety rules, weaken the inspection of imported food, and block efforts to strengthen U.S. food safety standards."

Last month, the Center for Food Safety outlined the top five reasons "eaters should be worried about Obama's new trade deal." At the top of the list was the TPP's ability to undermine efforts to label GMO foods. "More broadly," the Center wrote in October, "any U.S. food safety rules on labeling, pesticides, or additives that [are] higher than international standards could be subject to challenge as 'illegal trade barriers.'"

Indeed, according to Food & Water Watch, the final text released Thursday indicates that under a TPP regime, "agribusiness and biotech seed companies can now more easily use trade rules to challenge countries that ban GMO imports, test for GMO contamination, do not promptly approve new GMO crops or even require GMO labeling."

"The TPP food safety and labeling provisions are worse than expected and bad news for American consumers and farmers," said Hauter. "Congress must reject this raw deal that handcuffs food safety inspectors and exposes everyone to a rising tide of unsafe imported food."

'Death Warrant for the Open Internet'

"If U.S. Congress signs this agreement despite its blatant corruption, they'll be signing a death warrant for the open Internet and putting the future of free speech in peril," stated Evan Greer, Fight for the Future

TPP 15

Public opinion converges on scientific opinion

BY ALAN JOURNET

Is it the Pope, the drought, or the regional wildfires? For whatever reason, studies this year reveal Americans are becoming more concerned about global warming and its climate consequences.

A Yale study from April revealed increasing concern among Americans about global warming. Since southwestern and western states are where the greatest impact is being felt, these regions expressed the greatest concern. Eastern inland states, where the problems have been less severe, reported that 70% of Americans believe there is solid evidence of global warming over the last four decades, near the 2008 high of 72%. Even Republicans (56%) joined Independents (69%) and Democrats (79%) with majorities agreeing. Meanwhile, the number in denial has plummeted to a record low of 16%.

Finally, a University of Texas (Austin) study revealed a 90% positive response to the question "Do you think climate change is occurring?" among Democrats with 59% agreement among Republicans. Despite rejection of the data and conclusions by climate science deniers, study after study over the last ten years has shown that over 95% of climate scientists accept that global warming is happening and humans are contributing through emissions of atmospheric pollutants.

Science is not partisan. It involves collecting data to test hypotheses; data have no partisan tilt.

Regrettably, many individuals impose partisan preconceptions on the data and decide to accept or reject the science on that basis. What these studies show is that Americans, despite being inundated with distortions and deceptions from fossil fuel corporations, partisan political commentators, and politicians themselves, are finally seeing through the fog. Among Americans of all partisan loyalties, climate science is becoming, as it should be, a non-partisan issue. Just

like tobacco company researchers before them who knew the dangers of smoking even as corporate executives denied it, we now learn that Exxon researchers have known about the global warming impacts of their product since the 1970s. For over forty years, fossil fuel executives have exhibited a callous disregard for this information. As knowledge of their concealment grows among potential voters, politicians and commentators who still spread misinformation in service of short term profits for fossil fuel corporations rather than promote the wellbeing of their constituents and future Like Oregon, most western states have suffered a complex of trends exacerbated by global warming.

If we had experienced one trend alone, we could reasonably dismiss it as just another aberrant weather pattern. However, if we look at them collectively, we should connect the dots and seek the common cause. The trends evident over the last four decades are: rising temperature; increased number of days over 100 degrees Fahrenheit; reduced snowfall; earlier spring snowmelt; reduced soil moisture. These trends have most likely conspired to increase the fire risk with which we are all too aware. Indeed, data tell us that the western wildfire season has extended two and a half months over this four decade period with an increase in both forest acres burned and the number of wildfires over 1000 acres.

It is disturbing, then, to see so many elected representatives clinging to the view that there is no global warming. This view neither serves their current constituents nor future residents of their districts. In a global context, Oregon may be but a minor contributor to the problem, but we must each and all, take responsibility for our actions and become part of the solution rather than continue to be the problem.

Alan Journet, Co-facilitator, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now



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Oregon workers need \$15.99/hr. to make ends meet

Minimum wage workers in Oregon are falling further behind. While the minimum wage is \$9.25, an actual living wage--the amount it takes a single worker to make ends meet--is \$15.99 per hour.

This week, Oregon Action is releasing “Pay Up! Long Hours and Low Pay Leave Workers at a Loss,” a national study showing that even the \$15 an hour wage that is gaining momentum around the country is a modest proposal, and not enough for workers in most states to make ends meet. Working full time should provide financial stability, not poverty. Low wage workers provide services we all count on every day as we do our shopping, dine out, or take our children to child care.

“This report puts real numbers to what we all know: minimum wage keeps workers trapped in poverty. It is unrealistic—and astonishing—that a someone making minimum wage would have to work 69 hours a week just to make ends meet,” said Darlene Huntress, Executive Director of Oregon Action. “Legislators in Salem have a responsibility to raise the minimum wage to a number where hard-working Oregonians can at least begin to take care of their families. \$13.50 is a good place to start.”

“Pay Up!” also reveals how much a worker supporting a family needs to be paid:

- The living wage for a single adult and school age child: \$24.16
- A single adult with a toddler and a school age child: \$31.23
- Two adults (one working) with a toddler and school age child: \$31.29
- Two adults (both working) with a toddler and a school age child: \$20.91 each.

A living wage allows workers and families to meet their basic needs without public assistance and set aside a small amount of savings for emergencies such as a car repair, or plan ahead for expenses such as high winter heating bill. The living wage calculation includes food, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, (child care) clothing, savings and state and federal taxes.

Poverty and homelessness are human and civil rights issues

BY JAMES ABRO

In 1962, Thomas Kuhn wrote The Structure of Scientific Revolution. In it he defined and popularized the concept of “paradigm shift”. Kuhn argues that scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but a “series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions”, and in those revolutions “one conceptual world view is replaced by another”. I feel that we need a paradigm shift in how we perceive the problems of poverty and homelessness and that it is time, right now, for an intellectually violent revolution.

We can start by no longer calling efforts to address poverty a ‘War on Poverty’. However well-intentioned that phrase might have been in its original use, it has come to mean something else entirely over time. A war on poverty now implies that poverty, and the poor, are enemies we must overcome as a society.

In an article published by TalkPoverty called How We Punish People for Being Poor Rebecca Vallas points out the sundry ways our society blithely exploits the poor. There are also news reports every day depicting how we harass, fine, incarcerate and abuse people for the ‘crime’ of being poor.

But these articles and reports do not address the underlying issue of why our society feels it has the right to punish people for being poor.

Rather than point out the reasons for that, and analyzing them – we need a paradigm shift away from the attitudes and beliefs that allow these kinds of abuses to take place as a matter of course.

So how do we do this?

We need to start by viewing and treating poverty and homelessness as what they are: human and civil rights issues.

We’ve seen this happen before: Blacks were characterized as inferior to Whites (and treated that way); women were thought of as window dressing for men’s lives (and treated that way); and LGBT people were dismissed as abnormal (and treated that way). Nothing fundamentally changed in how we viewed these groups of persons until we started recognizing them as fully human, entitled to the same human and constitutional rights as anyone else.

The same has to happen now with the poor. Here are my specific recommendations:

- Decriminalize homelessness. But don’t stop there; let’s make it a criminal offense, a hate crime, for anyone caught abusing the poor and homeless just for being poor or homeless.
- A national Housing First mandate. Housing is the humane and dignified solution to homelessness, not isolating, abusing, fining and imprisoning.
- Do whatever it takes to force every state to accept Medicaid expansion. Basic healthcare is a human right; not something that should be denied for short-sighted political reasons.

James Abro is the author of An Odyssey in the Great American Safety Net, a personal memoir of homelessness and recovery. He is the founder of Advocate for Economic Fairness and 32 Beach Productions. He works locally with faith-based Homeless Outreach groups, and nationally as an advocate for Homeless Rights. He is a regular contributor to Rebelle Society and TalkPoverty.

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Wendy Davis in town

BY REGINA AYARS

I was lucky enough to attend the Planned Parenthood Fundraiser, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon (PPSO). Wendy Davis, Filibuster Extraordinaire (13 hours), Planned Parenthood Advocate, former Texas Senator and candidate for Texas Governor in 2014, was the keynote speaker. Planned Parenthood is embroiled in a highly visible national controversy with the Republican Party. The organization is being accused of profiting from providing fetal tissue to medical groups for use in research. Only a handful of Planned Parenthood providers are engaged in this activity and only with the written permission of the women receiving the service. There have been hearings, one in which the President of Planned Parenthood, Cecile Richards, was grilled and insulted. The Republican majority Congress is threatening to once again shut down the government unless Planned Parenthood funding is totally eliminated. That means that millions of poor and low income women who rely on Medicaid or have no medical insurance will NOT have access to wellness exams, birth control, STD testing, transgender care and abortions (only 3% of services worldwide are abortions).

Wendy Davis told her personal story about being a young single mother who relied on services at Planned Parenthood for her healthcare and family planning. She never forgot the support she received and has been actively supportive of

Planned Parenthood ever since. She has been advocating for Planned Parenthood and the need for their services not only in Texas but across the country. Her home state of Texas along with Louisiana have withdrawn state funding for Planned Parenthood transferring that funding to other clinics who are not able to accommodate so many new patients. Luckily, Planned Parenthood has filed a lawsuit with the courts and funding is still in place - for now. Who will be hurt? Poor women, single mothers, teenagers.

Other speakers included Chela Sanchez, Co-President of the Southern Oregon Latino Scholarship Fund, Lisa Gardner, President and CEO, PPSO, Fern Bostelman-Rinaldi, PPSO REV Youth Leader, Francesca Critelli, PPSO REV Youth Leader, and Anne Mattson, Board Chair PPSO. The event was organized by Joan Amaratti, Planned Parenthood Business Development Manager, Medford.

Education has always been at the heart of PPSO’s mission. PPSO was founded by a group of local citizens in 1965 who were concerned about the lack of access to education regarding family planning in the community. PPSO began by distributing literature about family planning and providing counseling services regarding problem pregnancies, voluntary sterilizations, birth control, adoption and abortion. The Planned Parenthood contraceptive clinic of Jackson County was opened in 1975.

I support Planned Parenthood and the work that they do.



Texas State Senator Wendy Davis

Perspective

CONTINUED FROM 9

land could work against the war and fossil fuel economy by providing non-fossil fuel vehicles for public transport. Also, Ashland residents could vote to subsidize the Rogue Valley’s public transit system so that it can again operate on the weekends.

I heard Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy speak recently about the success her city council’s Sustainability Commission has had in passing ordinances which require Eugene residents to reduce their emissions. Ashland’s city council could learn something about priorities from our neighbors a bit north.



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Homeless

CONTINUED FROM 9

normal. But in order to fit into a community that I have grown to love, I forced myself to conform. I come to these meetings, I integrate myself into public happenings, I volunteer at the Medford public Library. I do have a plan. And I can find a purpose and with effort and courage I will direct my unhappiness into changing our world. The other kids, they don't want anything. They don't want to be off the streets, they don't want your privilege. They want to disrupt society and challenge your beliefs, Your entire existence is a threat to them and that is why they disrupt your day to day activities. It's misdirected unhappiness and that is okay. What's not okay is obvious illegal behavior. However these people do not live by the same rules. That is the whole point. Regardless of our unsettled youth, resources and counsel should be implemented for the homeless. When you begin to see these people as potential and welcome the challenge of a different mentality there can be monumental growth on both ends."

Balsimo's powerful words struck a nerve in some folks and there were some comments made on social media that showcase the frenzied fear that this meeting seemed to stir up in local residents. A woman named Sheila Lanni said, "I no longer shop downtown, nor can I walk my dog downtown or even on the Greenway because of fear. The streets are not crowded with tourists, but with terrorists. I have been harassed and threatened, my dog has been attacked by the "dog gangs" (on ropes, not leashes) on every corner and park downtown. Most telling is the statement made by Brigieta Balsimo...Sounds like a form of terrorism to me. Would we be this tolerant to other types of terrorist threats in our city? I think not."

Out of the 35 people who spoke, only one woman identified herself as someone who is currently homeless. Kate O'Dell gets the last word. She expressed that a solution is to hire an advisory board of people who are homeless and noted that there's a huge amount of trauma on the streets, including runaways, and those with PTSD. She urged everyone to try to understand what we're all dealing with and to have compassion.

"Homeless people help each other. You don't survive by following the rules that are stacked against you."

Editor's reflections: It was obvious that the Ashland Chamber of Commerce pushed for this meeting and it was discouraging to hear negative attacks on homeless folks rather than focusing on real solutions. Last month (October 2015, RVCP) we covered the Department of Justice statement of interest, which spells out that the criminalization of homelessness is soon to be a federal crime. Ashland does not have year round shelter for homeless people. The few shelter resources in Medford are often full and have limitations that keep people stuck in homelessness. Covering this listening session was a hard task, because we could not ignore that terrible things were said at that meeting, things that we found to be so outrageous that they can't be ignored. Bad behavior is not exclusive to any one class of people. We want the city to address and lift the camping ban and create an inclusive environment where all people can survive by their means. We're interested in hearing from the community and welcome your letters. If you are homeless, we especially want to hear from you. editor@rvcommunitypress.com

Healthcare

CONTINUED FROM 11

as human beings and how we make sure that we can live up to the elegance of the words written in the Declaration and so oft cited by those who would tear us apart for personal gain. All men, all women, all children are created equal.

Finally, just moments before we needed to part, a dear friend and brilliant woman professor, Lindy Hern, handed me a gift she brought me from her home state of Hawaii. It is a beautiful little jar of ginger-guava lip balm. Indeed. Another balm. I march on. We march on. We will achieve our goal, and soon we will gather in joyous celebration that the years of struggle when we worried about the path forward will wash away, and we will leave our children the promise we hold dear -- a nation that lives up to its earliest bargaining agreement that brought us together almost 240 years ago to believe we are indeed not only deserving of equal rights but endowed with those rights.

Won't you be a part of creating this kind of nation and this kind of world? Join us. A better society is coming. Everybody in, nobody out. Our battle cry sounds an awful lot like that long ago declaration, and it calls us to action.

Rogue Valley Community Press

Jackson County Commissioner faces ethics complaint

VIA KOB15

A Jackson county commissioner is in a hot water after a county auditor filed a complaint citing possible irregularities in commissioner Doug Breidenthal's use of public funds.

The concern is that Breidenthal may have broken state ethics laws.

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission will determine if they will investigate the case for possible fraud, misuse or abuse of public funds, or illegal acts. According to Breidenthal, "It's just simply not true."

In a 37 page complaint, filed with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, County Auditors have asked the commission to investigate whether Breidenthal was reimbursed for travel expenses by both the County and the Association of Oregon counties, a group that works with Oregon counties.

Another concern in the complaint, contributions to a campaign account from organizations who've stood before Breidenthal and the board on county business including Murphy Company, Combined Transport, and the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe and over 10-thousand dollars worth of travel expenses for himself and his wife, who Breidenthal says is employed by his campaign.

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission will take 30 days to gather evidence and investigate in private before an open investigation begins.

Breidenthal says he will continue his work as chairman of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners.



Building Bridges for Peace

An afternoon of stories and song is planned for Sunday, November 15. "Building Bridges for Peace", a local event with worldwide significance will raise money for an expanded printing of a children's book. Hideko Tamura-Snider, the author of "When a Peace Tree Blooms", explores how we can find a sense of peace, and resilience after terrible suffering, will be joined by Tami and Sarah Marston. The Marston family will share their songs, videos and recollections on their trip to Japan in 2014.

The event will benefit One Sunny Day Initiatives (OSDI), Tamura-Snider's non-profit, which is sponsoring this global project.

Museum quality reproductions of Japanese prints will be available for sale as well as teas and appetizers from around the world. Proceeds will benefit OSDI.

Tamura-Snider is an official Peace Ambassador to Japan and she will share information about her August trip as well as an update on the projects of OSDI.

The event will take place at the First Presbyterian Church, Walker Street and

Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland. Doors will open at 2:30 for viewing the reproductions of Japanese prints and other items which will be available by donation to this project for peace. The event begins at 3:00 PM.

Tickets for "Building Bridges for Peace" are \$10 and can be purchased at Tree House Books in Ashland.

For Medford outlets and more information call OSDI at 541-734-8525, or call 541-482-8915.

See www.osdinitiatives.com.

What's on your mind?

The Rogue Valley Community Press welcomes your articles, letters, PSA's, poems, artwork and events.

Send your stories to editor@rvcommunitypress.com, or call the RVCP hotline at 541-622-9483.

The Living Newspaper: using the news as inspiration for poetry

If you have recently found yourself opening the daily newspaper with trepidation about what you might find, or reading human interest stories with greater enthusiasm than you can summon for serious world or local issues, you are not alone. Join in a poetry workshop, The Living Newspaper: Using the News as Inspiration for Poetry with presenter Dori Appel, on Saturday, November 14, from 2 – 4 p.m., in the Adams Meeting Room of the Medford Branch Library, 205 South Central Avenue.

In this workshop, current major news items, as well as lighter accounts of human or animal exploits, will be used as writing prompts. Some of the news-related poetry currently being published on the Internet may also be explored. Please bring pen

and paper, plus an appetite for discovery. The workshop is free, but registration is requested by emailing marisahp9@gmail.com by Thursday, November 12.

Dori Appel's collection of poems, Another Rude Awakening, is published by Cherry Grove Collections, and her poems have also been widely published in magazines and anthologies. A playwright as well as a poet, her plays have been produced throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. She was the winner of the Oregon Book Award in Drama in 1998, 1999, and 2001.

Cosponsors for this event are Jackson County Library Services and Rogue Valley Chapter/Oregon Poetry Association. For more information, please contact the Medford Branch Library at 541-774-8679 or visit jcls.org.

NOVEMBER 2015

Phoenix Free Community Dinner

The Phoenix community dinner is held on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays each month @ 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm by Phoenix Community Kitchen. Everyone is welcome, bring your neighbors and friends. First Presbyterian Church, 121 W 2nd St. Phoenix. For info: 541-535-1119.

FILM: Pay 2 Play

Citizens for Peace and Justice will be showing the film "Pay 2 Play" in the Adams Room, Medford Library on Tue, November 10, 7pm – 8pm.

This extraordinary film asks the question: How can we get out from under the system of pay-to-play politics, where politicians reward their donors with public money and special favors? In Pay 2 Play, filmmaker John Ennis examines how corporations have taken over our democracy as he follows outsiders using their voices to change the game om American politics.

Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

Ashland Culture of Peace Commission provides the City Council, city operations, and community a lens and compass that guides and informs the mindset, practices, and higher order values that are essential to live in and create a sustainable Culture of Peace and well-being.

Commission members meeting will be held on Thursday, November 19, 4pm – 6pm at the ACPC office 33 First St, Suite 1, Ashland

Bellview Grange

Movie Night

The Man Who Planted Trees is a beautiful, soulful animated art film about a man who transforms a barren landscape by planting trees.

The movie will be Thursday, November 19th at 6:30 PM. The event is free.

There will be a discussion following the movie about food forests, seed saving, soil remediation and the related projects supported by Bellview Grange.

For more information, call 541-535-1854.

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Partnership between Facebook and police could make planning protests impossible

VIA RUSSIA TODAY

A partnership between police departments and social media sites discussed at a convention in Philadelphia this week could allow law enforcement to keep anything deemed criminal off the Internet—and even stop people from organizing protests.

A high-ranking official from the Chicago Police Department told attendees at a law enforcement conference on Monday that his agency has been working with a security chief at Facebook to block certain users from the site “if it is determined they have posted what is deemed criminal content,” reports Kenneth Lipp, an independent journalist who attended the lecture.

Lipp reported throughout the week from the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference, and now says that a speaker during one of the presentations suggested that a relationship exists between law enforcement and social media that that could be considered a form of censorship.

According to Lipp, the unnamed CPD officer said specifically that his agency was working with Facebook to block users’ by their individual account, IP address or device, such as a cell phone or computer.

Elsewhere at the conference, Lipp said law enforcement agencies discussed new social media tools that could be implemented to aid in crime-fighting, but at the price of potentially costing citizens their freedom.

“Increasingly in discussion in workshops held by and for top police executives from throughout the world (mostly US, Canada and the United Kingdom, with others like Nigeria among a total of 13,000 representatives of the law enforcement community in town for the event), and widely available from vendors, were technologies and department policies that allow agencies to block content, users and even devices – for example, ‘Geofencing’ software that allows departments to block service to a specified device when the device leaves an established virtual geographic perimeter,” Lipp wrote. “The capability is a basic function of advanced mobile technologies like smartphones, ‘OnStar’ type features that link drivers through GIS to central assistance centers, and automated infrastructure and other hardware including unmanned aerial systems that must ‘sense and respond.’”

Apple, the maker of the highly popular iPhone, applied for a patent last year which allows a third-party to compromise a wireless device and change its functionality, “such as upon the occurrence of a certain event.”

Bloggers at the website PrivacySOS.org acknowledged that former federal prosecutor-turned-Facebook security chief Joe Sullivan was scheduled to speak during the conference at a panel entitled “Helping Law Enforcement Respond to Mass Gatherings Spurred by Social Media,” and suggested that agencies could be partnering with tech companies to keep



users of certain services for communicating and planning protests and other types of demonstrations. A 2011 Bloomberg report revealed that Creativity Software, a UK based company with international clients, had sold geofencing programs to law enforcement in Iran which was then used to track political dissidents. US Senator Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) told Bloomberg that those companies should be condemned for being complicit in human rights abuses. And while this week’s convention in Philadelphia was for law enforcement agencies around the globe, it wouldn’t be too surprising to see American companies adopt similar systems.

“Is Facebook really working with the police to create a kill switch to stop activists from using the website to mobilize support for political demonstrations?” the PrivacySOS blog asked. “How would such a switch function? Would Facebook, which reportedly hands over our data to government agencies at no cost, block users from posting on its website simply because the police ask them to? The company has been criticized before for blocking environmentalist and anti-GMO activists from posting, but Facebook said those were mistakes. Let’s hope this is a misunderstanding, too.”

Lipp has since pointed to a recent article in Governing magazine in which it was reported that the Chicago Police Department is using “network analysis” tools to identify persons of interest on social media.

“95.9 percent of law enforcement agencies use social media, 86.1 percent for investigative purposes,” Lipp quoted from the head of the social media group for the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Our nation needs this balm as single-payer action surges forward

BY DONNA SMITH

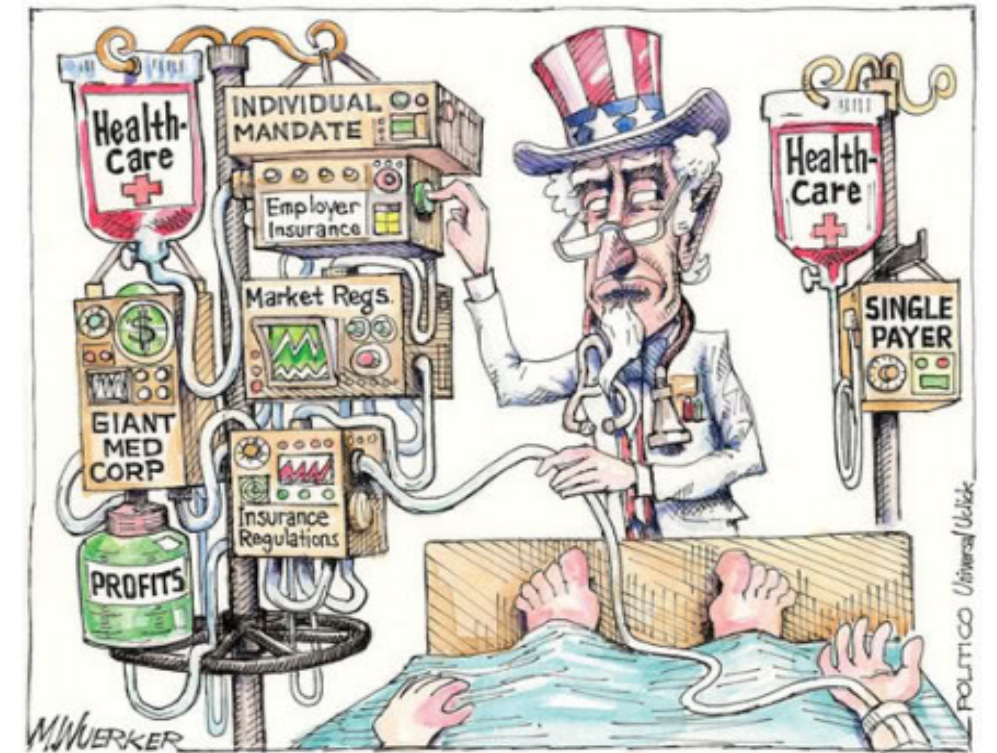
Over the past few days, more than 700 people from all over the country came together for the annual single-payer strategy conference. This year, we were in Chicago, my hometown. Of course we shared ideas, successes, concerns, and knowledge about the kind of healthcare reform that might truly give us the best healthcare system in the world through an improved Medicare for all for life model.

The convening groups represented Healthcare-NOW, the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care, One Payer States, and Physicians for a National Health Program.

Leaders from this movement get precious little time to gather face-to-face during the year. There were scores of nurses from all over the country -- New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Texas, California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and beyond. There were doctors from all over the place. And there were those of us who are patients who have been injured (or might be injured) by our aggressively greedy healthcare system. Labor leaders brought the hopes of their rank and file membership that someday we will actually allow contract bargaining to surround much more than healthcare benefits and costs that have squeezed out other issues like wages, vacation and other leave benefits and so on.

The conference opened with a joint protest at the Blue Cross/Blue Shield building in Chicago. One of the great moments for me was seeing the medical students passionately calling for changes to their chosen profession. It gave me hope for the future and the potential for real change.

But the highlight of the conference for me came in something much less quantifiable but much more powerful -- the balm of knowing that this wonderful nation is filled with compassionate, decent people who believe in the promise of our Declaration of Independence in which we read that all men are endowed by their creator of certain unalienable rights, and



that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There can be none of those dearly held rights for Americans when our healthcare system snuffs out any chance for equality and the opportunity to live life to its fullest extent.

We are not enemies of our neighbors, our business owners or our fellow Americans who may hold very different political positions. When it comes to our unalienable rights, we are one.

On Sunday morning when we convened for the final session, John Lozier of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council called us together. John reminded us that after Halloween comes the Day of the Dead, and he asked that we silence ourselves -- not an easy task for this many opinionated, wonderful social justice warriors -- and the room grew quiet. John asked us to remember all of those who have lost the struggle to stay alive in the midst of a cloud of inhumanity that has emboldened those who profit from the pain of others. I cannot say that it was silent. Although there was an absence of

noise, the energy of compassion swelled in the air.

In those few moments of collective remembrance, the room was filled with a palpable sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves that drives us onward to the day when our healthcare system unites us around healing and health rather than profits and wealth. I tried to turn my thoughts away to gather myself for the morning’s work, but the wonder, comfort and compassion washed over me in waves. I tried not to weep. I fought back my tears. And all at once, I knew why it is not only possible but probable that we will secure the rights we all need to be as free and healthy as our neighbors. I felt what it might be like to rest in that security and compassion. And let me say, it was one of my life’s “ah ha” moments. Imagine a society that healed instead of arming itself for the next gun assault our streets.

So, going forward to do the work we envisioned is so much more important than our focus on the healthcare system or other progressive struggles. It is about who we are

HEALTHCARE 12



Southern Oregon Seed Collective
is dedicated to providing the FREE (legal) states
in the U.S. with high quality marijuana seed
germinated in southern Oregon. We do not buy
from other seed companies and then mark up;
we sell our own high quality genetics
at very reasonable prices.

All our seeds are ORGANIC and NON GMO.

For products and ordering visit:
www.southernoregonseed.biz

October 2015 in Palestine

BY DEB VANPOOLEN

Each day of October 2015 stories of public killings and other abuses against Palestinians have made their way around the globe. A Red Crescent spokesperson told Ma'an News that in October 2015 "at least 760 Palestinians were shot with live rounds across the occupied Palestinian territory, while another 1,857 were hit with rubber-coated steel bullets. He said that a further 5,399 Palestinians were treated for excessive tear gas inhalation during the period." More than ever, the truth about conditions of life and death in Palestine must be known, understood, and ended in order for justice and peace to come to the Middle East. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on October 22, "this crisis would not have erupted....if the Palestinians did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century."

When I visited the West Bank of Palestine in 2013, I learned much about the area from Mazin Qumseyah, a geneticist who left his professorship at Duke University to teach at Bethlehem University and live in the West Bank village Beit Sahour where he grew up. Mazin said in his October 16th blog, "Since October 1, 2015 ... 32 Palestinian youth

including 8 children were killed and 1300 Palestinians (one third of them children) were injured. Seven Israelis were killed and dozens reported injured (none children). In compliance with Zionist masters and due to few Arabs bothering to act, most Western media ignore reality and speak the classic Zionist mythology that labels all resistance as terrorism and that only hopes for calm (but not freedom). It also ignores the systematic state terrorism inflicted every day for seven decades by a rogue colonial apartheid state on the "unwanted" natives. We Palestinians have always called for justice and coexistence with full human rights. Now John Kerry representing Israel wants to come to calm things down. But the USA government is the reason for this mayhem as you fund and directly support the colonizers. People resist colonization. Only when you stop funding and arming and shielding Israel from International law, only then people can listen to you. The reason billions are sent to Israel is because of a Zionist lobby that intimidates and in many cases buys support from compliant politicians thus putting Zionist interests ahead of US public interest"

Gaza

CONTINUED FROM 7

follow up with the characters of the film. He will report online in a web series where video updates will be posted.

As Jacobsen travels throughout Oregon to screen clips of his film, he is raising funds to return to Gaza. Maurice will screen previews of the film on November 18th at 7pm at Ashland Public Library, November 19th at 7pm at Medford Public Library and November 12 at Portland State University.

For more information about Maurice's projects, please see wegaza.com.

For Sale: One Piano

For sale, 1920 Knabe Baby Grand Player. \$4000 or best offer. All proceeds from this sale go to a local non-profit org. and will be a tax deductible donation! Beautiful, excellent shape, plays great. Comes with 30- 40 music rolls For more information contact Michael at KSKQ 541-482-3999

Free yoga for vets

Rasa Yoga Center in Medford is offering 2 weeks of free unlimited yoga to all veterans, police officers, firefighters, and EMT's during the month of November to show their gratitude for your service to our country and community. info@rasayogacenter.com or 541.245.2667.

Don't hate the media, be the media!

The Rogue Valley Community Press welcomes your articles, letters, PSA's, poems, artwork and events. Send your stories to editor@rvcommunitypress.com, or call the RVCP hotline at 541-622-9483.

"We All Live in Gaza"

Film preview from Maurice Jacobsen

BY DEB VANPOOLEN

Although the US government enables Israel to colonize Palestine through its yearly \$3 billion foreign aid, many people within both the US and Israel are deeply opposed to US tax dollars funding the Israel war machine. Many Americans and Israelis are taking actions to share true stories of life and death in Palestine.

Documentary maker Maurice Jacobsen has spent the past 6 years living and working in the West Bank, Israel and Gaza. In the 16 months he spent in Gaza Maurice met and interviewed dozens of men, women and children. Maurice chronicled their sadness, anxiety and anger. He also noted equal measures of hope and optimism. He came away with a deep respect for the Palestinian people.

From the footage Maurice gained when he lived in Gaza, he made a film called "We All Live in Gaza". In the film Gazans describe a system that they cannot escape. Ayman Mohamis shares with viewers how he cared for his father, who later died, because his home had been shelled by Israeli tanks in 2009. A young woman, Deema Mischal, points to the looming border barricades behind her and tells the camera she will be killed if she walks "over there." Deema describes how her dreams to become a doctor are being cut by the wall Israel has imposed on her life.

Communications with Gaza have been difficult and Maurice Jacobsen does not know how the people he came to know over the years have survived the bombings of summer 2014. From July 7 to August 26, Israel launched 50 days of unconscionable attacks on Gaza. 2200 Palestinians were killed (70% of them civilian and over 500 children). At least 12,000 people lost their homes. 22 schools were destroyed and 24 medical facilities were damaged. Maurice hopes to return to Gaza in early 2016 to

GAZA 10

OCCUPY MEDFORD & CPJ
STRONGLY SUPPORT THE GOOD
EFFORTS OF **SOCAN** AND **ROGUE**
CLIMATE TO HELP ENSURE A
CLIMATE FUTURE FOR OUR
CHILDREN IN THE ROGUE VALLEY



**Citizens for Peace & Justice
and Occupy Medford**

FILM NIGHT

Free Public Screening of
films and documentaries
of social justice significance.

7:00 PM

**Downtown Medford Library
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10 "PAY-2-PLAY"**

HOW UNLIMITED MONEY IS CORRUPTING
THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM
www.facebook.com/OccupyMedford
email: occupymedford@gmail.com

We encourage people to come share
their causes, ideas and opinions every
Saturday at 10am in the Medford Library

99% STRONG!

Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship



**RVUUF is a liberal
religious community
open to all, honoring
diversity and freedom of
thought. The Fellowship
is comitted to social
action and justice.**

**87 Fourth Street • Ashland
541-482-4755**

Sunday Service 10:30 AM

I’m Homeless.

I’m sorry you feel helpless

BY KAI MOONEY

You’re angry with me. I can see that. You see me sitting on the sidewalk counting change and looking up at the door to a McDonald’s. I’m dirty and I smell, and nothing about that is your fault. You’re angry with me, I can tell. Not because I did anything wrong, but because of the way I make you feel. I make you feel helpless. You know that there is nothing that you can do to make me not homeless. I make you feel afraid that this might be you someday. I make you feel disgusted that anyone could live this way, and none of that is your fault.

You’re angry with me. I can tell. Not because of what I’m doing, but because of what I’m not doing. You’re angry that I’m not trying to change. You’re angry that I’m sleeping on the streets; that I spend all day begging for change and not trying to change. You’re angry with me because now I have somehow made this your problem.

I’m sorry you see me sitting on the sidewalk counting change and looking up at the door to a McDonald’s. I’m sorry I’m dirty and I smell, and nothing about that is your fault. I’m sorry – not because I did anything wrong, but because of the way I make you feel. I’m sorry I make you feel helpless. I’m sorry that you know that there is nothing that you can do to make me not homeless. I’m sorry I make you feel afraid that this might be you someday. I’m sorry I make you feel disgusted that anyone could live this way, and none of that is your fault. I’m sorry that I’m sleeping on the streets, that I spend all day begging for change. I’m sorry that now I have somehow made this your problem.

I forgive you for being angry with me. Please forgive me for being homeless.

He’s not there again today. He has been there every day for years. You’re actually worried. Why? He is just a homeless guy. He’s not there again today. For months you passed him by without a thought. One day you figured, what the heck I’ll give him a buck. He smiles and says thank you and



Phot by Kai Mooney

god bless you, and he means it. He’s not there again today.

You started carrying a couple of extra bucks just for him. A couple of times you even brought him coffee. Just a routine, barely a second thought. Doing something nice, giving back, helping out. He’s not there again today.

Do you ask around? Do you put up flyers? Do you call the hospitals or the police? Where did he go? Is he okay? He’s not there again today.

Does he know that you’re worried? Does he know that you care? Before he was gone you had no clue how much he meant to you. He’s no longer just some homeless guy. He’s not there again today. You knew his face, his smile, his way. His dirty coat, old and frayed. You never even knew his name. Why is he not there? Why did he go away? All you know is, he’s not there again today...

We must stand together and speak as one. Let our message spread through the streets like a flood, so that every ear shall hear and every mouth shall speak: We will not be ignored any longer.

Kai Mooney is homeless and is petitioning the Senate to pass a nationwide Homeless Bill of Rights.

Homeless

CONTINUED FROM 1

to our community, nor contribute to it. Collectively, I think want to live in a place where people can raise families without fear. How bad does it have to get?” Some of the stories that were told were incidents that have happened over the last several years and yet the meeting did not seek to clarify that, leaving many with the notion that Ashland is unsafe.

Not all of the comments expressed at the meeting were negative about the transient population. More than a dozen people spoke about how the issue of homelessness is a humanitarian issue and several pointed out that the transients who pass through town are refugees.

The manager of the Ashland Community Resource Center, Leigh Madsen suggests that one solution might be for the city to use the plaza space more often, especially in creative and inclusive ways. He thinks that creating a diverse culture would benefit us all, those housed and homeless.

A St. Vincent de Paul volunteer, David Hill, questioned the validity of using the term “home free” to describe anyone who is homeless. “There’s a false dichotomy between homeless and home free.” He went on to explain that when someone becomes homeless, it’s human nature to not identify oneself as having fallen into that situation. “They are homeless, but look to a little bit of pride by saying ‘it’s my choice’. It’s not really their choice, they are stuck just like the rest of them. If people are treated like animals, they will act like animals. If they are treated with respect, they will act with respect.”

The idea of having welcoming Main Street ambassadors was brought up by longtime resident and activist Dot Fisher-Smith. “I’ve lived in this community since 1981,” she said, “I want to point to the bigger picture that these kinds of behavior are symptomatic of a society that creates war... rather than taking care of each other.” She went on to describe how as an elderly woman who rides her bike around town, she often has encounters with homeless people and expressed that they are all mostly friendly “because she greets them with a smile. When met with fear or hostility they are going to give back what they get. I think more ordinances and laws are just more repressive. The behaviors are just a few people.” She urged locals to attend the community meal at Uncle Food’s Diner on Tuesday evenings and thinks that if the folks

who are afraid of homeless people would sit down with them and talk, that would be a step towards finding a lasting solution.

Another local business owner, Susan Franz says that we need to have public restrooms open 24/7 and that it isn’t right to cite people for urinating in public when there’s nowhere else for them to go, She said, “I am not referring to them and those people, but welcoming them as guests and asking them to comply with our standards.”

Several local homeowners spoke of having to clean up homeless camps and described how people sleep in area parks. A man named Nick (last name on audio indecipherable) said he lives near the railroad tracks and talked about groups of homeless that camp behind boulders near his property. “Sometimes when my wife and I go to the gym, we almost trip over them,” he said. Nick went on to describe how he’s watched people sleeping and defecating in Railroad Park and believes that the solution is for the police to instruct “those people to move along.” He said that the homeless are there by choice. “Those people are not part of our community, they are just using our community for their needs and moving on.”

The meeting went on for three hours and we were able to record all but the last half hour. Before we left, we heard from a young woman named Brigieta Balsimo, who identified herself as being home free.

“I want to share a different perspective on why this is happening. I am a former preschool teacher. I am a homeless, unemployed, transient. I was a transient for 6 months, and now here I am. I was home free by choice. I had 3 jobs, I paid my bills, my rent. I had a back yard and a car, and it wasn’t enough. The travelers you see are in every city and they are an entire generation. You must understand that this is a mentality, This is a rebellion, a movement against everything American society has produced and that’s okay to an extent. People are changing, the world is in revolt. My generation is trying to develop a culture they can believe in. Unfortunately they don’t believe in buying a house, having a 9-5, a bank account, getting married. They want something different and I can tell you right now, we don’t know how to get it.”

Balsimo continued, “This is the product of misdirected unhappiness, of current societal norms. I do not want to have a house. I don’t want to get married. I don’t want to be stationary, I don’t want to be considered

HOMELESS 12

Ashland’s problems and threats in perspective

BY DEB VANPOOLEN

Mayor Stromberg asked at a city council listening session last week, for input from Ashland residents about “people behaving in ways that clash with a friendly and respectful lifestyle”. He also asked the question: “What behaviors have you found problematic or threatening?”

The city council’s pursuit of these questions has been primarily fueled by Ashland’s business interests and has focused on the behavior of folks who live outside.

As I observe this dialogue, I see some striking ironies. The very same people whose business models create massive amounts of waste, as well as dependence on the fossil fuel-based economy, are complaining about a relatively small amount of garbage created by some particular individuals who simply take advantage of the natural environment and use it as a home. Because I am more concerned about wars, and global warming than some rude behavior by a minority of individuals within the outdoor living population, I find the behaviors of many of Ashland’s business owners more problematic than the behaviors which have been mentioned in this city council discussion.

Furthermore, when I look at Ashland’s so-called “friendly and respectful lifestyle” in context of people outside Ashland, I don’t find Ashland’s business sector to be a good model of friendly or respectful behavior. Ashland’s theaters, trinket shops, hotels and numerous restaurants all contribute to numerous embarrassing and tragic statistics. For instance, the global north, which is only 20% of the world population, is responsible for 70% of the global emissions. Each person in the industrialized world uses as much commercial energy as 10 people in the developing world. Though Ashland is a small, quaint town, the consumption habits of Ashland residents and its tourists have direct impact on people around the globe.

To solve the above mentioned problems of global warming and endless war, as well as the unpleasant behaviors of some

people living outside, we must see our city’s challenges in relationship to the challenges of our state, nation and globe and then understand how all these issues are connected.

Like Dot Fisher-Smith said in the listening session, social problems will increase when the budget primarily pays for war instead of social services. If Ashland really wants to get at the root of this issue of conflict with the homeless population, Ashland’s city council could lead in that effort by getting its priorities straight. First, as a city we must accept the diagnosis that our tourist-based economy is dysfunctional because it is dependent on very costly wars over natural resources. The consumer lifestyle feeds and eats a culture of destruction which annihilates our own habitat, habitat of others, as well as entire populations of human beings. Our entire US empire needs a major treatment program in order to to build a diverse, healthy culture of respect and dignity.

Ashland can start the treatment program by providing more opportunities to make healthy choices. Here are a couple ways that Ashland could offer more opportunities for everyone to make better choices. First, Ashland’s city council had the choice this past summer to invest in a solar park which would have provided the city with half of the power it needs, would have been funded by a motel/hotel tax and would have cost the city’s taxpayers nothing. I am deeply disturbed that in light of increasingly frequent devastating climate disasters directly linked to global warming, our city council rejected a smart solar park.

Now let’s look at transportation. I don’t own a car because I am opposed to the use of fossil fuels. I own two bicycles and use them as much as possible for transport. However, in order to pay my bills I have various jobs. I cannot take the time to always bike. In order to leave Ashland, I use public transportation. I am not innocent of using fossil fuels because most public transportation is operated by them. Thus, if I want to leave Ashland, I have no choice but to subsidize that destructive industry. Ash-

PERSPECTIVE 13